

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3970
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

S E C R E T BEIRUT 2216

EXDIS

DEPT PASS USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, LE, SY, IS, KU, SA
SUBJECT: CAIRO ACCORD: DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS

1. SUMMARY: HAD LONG DISCUSSION ON CAIRO ACCORD WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS MORNING MAY 10. HE GAVE RUNDOWN OF PAST DISCUSSIONS WITH QUADRIpartite COMMISSION AND CURRENT STATE OF PLAY. HE UNDERSTANDS DIFFICULTIES IMPLEMENTATION BY FORCE AND HOPES THAT POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION CAN BE REACHED ON SUBJECT BUT THIS IS GOING TO TAKE TIME. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS MORNING MAY 10 HE SAID PEOPLE IN WASHINGTON UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD WANT TO KNOW WHY CAIRO ACCORD HAD NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED TO DATE. HE SAID THAT IN FIRST PLACE DECISION IN THIS MATTER RESTED WITH SYRIANS, EVEN THOUGH HE WAS IN THEORY COMMANDER OF THE DETERRENT FORCES. SYRIANS WOULD TAKE THEIR OWN COUNSEL IN THIS MATTER AND WOULD REACT WHEN AND HOW THEY DECIDED WAS IN THEIR OWN BEST INTEREST.

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3. SARKIS SAID HE HAD HAD NUMBER OF MEETINGS WITH MEMBERS OF QUADRIpartite COMMISSION, I.E. AMBASSADORS OF EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, AND KUWAIT PLUS SYRIAN REPRESENTATIVE. TO BEGIN WITH, HE AND ARAFAT HAD BOTH SIGNED AN AGREEMENT AT RIYADH WHICH REQUIRED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 1969 CAIRO ACCORD AS MEANS OF BRINGING STABILITY TO LEBANON. HE HAD MET WITH MEMBERS OF THE QUADRIpartite

COMMISSION TO DISCUSS THE INTERPRETATION OF THE ACCORD AND HOW IT SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED. THE OTHER MEMBERS ORIGINALLY HAD SUGGESTED THEY MAKE A JOINT DRAFT BUT HE HAD POINTED OUT THAT THIS WAS AN INEFFICIENT WAY TO PROCEED AND SUGGESTED LEBANESE SIDE SHOULD DRAFT AN INTERPRETATION WHICH WOULD BE THE POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR THEIR DISCUSSION. THIS HAD BEEN ACCEPTED AND HE HAD COME FORTH WITH A DRAFT INTERPRETATION WHICH EVERYBODY HAD AGREED TO, AND AFTER CONSULTATION THE PALESTINIANS HAD AGREED TO AS WELL. IT HAD BEEN AGREED THAT ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION WOULD SIGN OFF ON INTERPRETATION. ARAFAT HAD THEN GONE TO KUWAIT AND TOLD KUWAITIS PALESTINIANS WERE OPPOSED TO THIS INTERPRETATION. KUWAITI AMBASSADOR HAD THEN COME AND SAID HE COULD NOT SIGN AGREED INTERPRETATION.

4. SARKIS THEN ASKED SAUDI WHAT HIS INSTRUCTIONS WERE AND LATTER HAD REPLIED TO EFFECT IT WOULD BE UNDIPLOMATIC FOR HIM TO SIGN IF KUWAITI DID NOT. THEN EGYPTIAN HAD SAID HE COULD NOT SIGN IF OTHERS DID NOT. THIS WAS ON EVE OF SARKIS'S DEPARTURE FOR LAST CAIRO SUMMIT. IN CAIRO, HE HAD LOBBIED WITH SADAT AS WELL AS WITH SAUDIS AND KUWAITIS TO SIGN OFF ON INTERPRETATION. HE HAD GOTTEN A SOLEMN COMMITMENT FROM SADAT TO THIS EFFECT AND THEN ARAFAT HAD STAYED BEHIND AND TALKED SADAT OUT OF IT.

5. WHEN SARKIS LEARNED OF THIS HE HAD TOLD MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION HE WAS GOING TO PROCEED UNILATERALLY, AND HE HAD THEN GIVEN ORDERS TO THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCES. JUST WHAT THEY WOULD DO AND WHEN WAS NOT YET CLEAR. IN MEANTIME, HE WAS CONTINUING CONTACTS WITH THE PARTIES. POINT OF DIFFERENCE WAS NOT QUESTION OF SEVEN PER THOUSAND, RATHER IT WAS PALESTINIAN INSISTENCE ON HAVING AN INDEPENDENT FORCE IN CAMPS TO PROTECT THEM. HIS POINT OF VIEW WAS THAT PROTECTION

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OF CAMPS WAS RESPONSIBILITY OF ARAB DETERRENT FORCES AND LEBANESE, NOT PALESTINIANS. LATTER HOWEVER WERE INSISTING ON HAVING THEIR OWN MILITARY FORCE IN CAMPS. THE QUESTION WAS NOT NUMBERS BUT RATHER NATURE.

6. I SAID WE UNDERSTOOD CAIRO ACCORD TO PROVIDE FOR A LIGHTLY ARMED MILITIA IN THE CAMPS IN ADDITION TO POLICE. SARKIS SAID THAT WAS CORRECT AND TERM "MILITIA" MEANT PEOPLE WHO WORKED DURING THE DAY AND ASSUMED GUARD DUTIES AT NIGHT. THEY WERE RESERVES, NOT ON PERMANENT DUTY. THIS WAS NOT THE SAME AS HAVING A PERMANENT MILITARY FORCE IN THE CAMPS.

7. I SAID I HAD TWO OBSERVATIONS. FIRST WAS THAT PALESTINIANS, FROM ALL WE COULD GATHER, WERE CONCERNED NOT ONLY ABOUT PROTECTING THEMSELVES AGAINST THE ISRAELIS, BUT ALSO AGAINST SYRIANS AND LEBANESE CHRISTIANS. THEY HAD NO CONFIDENCE IN THE SYRIANS AND GRAVE DOUBTS ABOUT THEIR INTENTIONS. IF THEY GAVE UP THEIR HEAVY ARMS THEY WOULD NO LONGER BE ABLE TO RESIST THEM. ALTERNATIVELY, THEY WERE AFRAID SYRIANS WOULD STAND TO ONE SIDE AND LET THE

CHRISTIAN EXTREMISTS ATTACK THEM. PRESIDENT INDICATED HE DID NOT THINK THIS FEAR WAS ALL THAT SERIOUS, TO WHICH I REPLIED THAT IT WAS REAL AND THE LEBANESE WOULD HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO OVERCOME PALESTINIAN LACK OF CONFIDENCE WHICH WAS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS CHRISTIAN LACK OF CONFIDENCE.

8. I SAID MY SECOND OBSERVATION WAS THAT HAVING WATCHED FROM AFAR THE SYRIAN OPERATION AGAINST A SMALL GROUP OF PALESTINIANS IN THE TARIQ AL JADIDAH DISTRICT SOME TWO WEEKS AGO, I HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE DIFFICULTY OF THE TASK. AFTER CAUSING A GREAT DEAL OF MATERIAL DAMAGE AND KILLING PERHAPS 100 LEBANESE CIVILIANS (SARKIS DEMURRED AND SAID NUMBER WAS MUCH SMALLER), SYRIANS HAD STILL NOT ELIMINATED THOSE THEY HAD SET OUT TO GET. PERHAPS IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR THE DETERRENT FORCES TO TAKE THE BEIRUT CAMPS, BUT IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT AND THERE WOULD BE ENORMOUS DAMAGE AND A GOOD DEAL OF LOSS OF LIFE. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT SEEMED TO ME THAT THE MORE PRUDENT APPROACH WOULD BE TO TRY TO WORK OUT A POLITICAL SECRET

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ACCOMMODATION OVER THIS ISSUE WITH THE PALESTINIANS. THIS CERTAINLY LOOKED MORE PROMISING THAN FORCEFUL INTERVENTION, PARTICULARLY SINCE I GATHERED THAT PALESTINIANS THEMSELVES WERE INTERESTED IN AGREEMENT ON IMPLEMENTATION.

9. SARKIS NODDED AGREEMENT AND SAID HE WAS TRYING TO PURSUE THE POSSIBILITIES OF A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. SAUDI AMBASSADOR HAD RECENTLY CONVEYED A NEW PROPOSAL FROM PLO WHICH WAS UNACCEPTABLE BUT AT LEAST THEY WERE STILL TALKING. IN MEANTIME, HE HAD PERSUADED THE CHRISTIANS TO BE PATIENT AND HAD CONVINCED THEM THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACCORD WAS NOT SOMETHING HE COULD ORDER TO BE DONE OVERNIGHT. IT WAS GOING TO TAKE TIME.

10. COMMENT: IT IS OBVIOUS THAT CAIRO ACCORD WEIGHS HEAVILY ON SARKIS'S MIND, AND HE IS AT PAINS TO EXPLAIN HIS POSITION TO VISITORS. IT IS NOT CLEAR TO ME, HOWEVER THAT HE UNDERSTANDS FULLY PALESTINIAN CONCERNS ABOUT THE INTENTIONS OF SYRIANS AND CHRISTIAN LEBANESE.

PARKER

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED USCINCEUR POLAD.

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